



Merced River Plan User Capacity Workshop

Exercise Package

- To enhance learning, several capacity concepts and steps will be examined through group exercises. Groups of four will be formed (with instructions from facilitators) to work through specific tasks.
- Follow-up “large group” discussion will allow participants to share information and ask questions.
- The exercises will feature examples from Yosemite Valley, which have been “generalized” to make them easy to work with.
- Facilitators will roam among the groups to answer questions during the small group tasks.
- Each group will pick a leader to keep the group on schedule.

Exercise 1

Specifying conditions to protect river values

- Each group will be assigned three example conditions (one social, one transportation, and one ecological).
- The group should review the front side of “information sheets” for their assigned conditions. This sheet includes:
 - A description of the condition and associated “outstandingly remarkable” value(s).
 - How the condition is measured (indicator).
 - Information that may help define acceptable conditions (standards), such as...
 - Current visitors’ evaluations of conditions
 - Existing conditions
 - Other scientific information about the condition
- For each condition, choose one standard and provide a rationale
 - Spend 5 to 7 minutes on each
 - Entire small group component should be completed within 20 minutes
- Large group discussion (25 minutes total)
 - Groups will be asked about the exercise and their decisions.
 - Instead of “reporting-out” all the details, be prepared to discuss challenges or insights for your group.
 - Facilitators have additional discussion questions.



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Exercise 2

Identifying use levels and “other actions” to meet standards

- Groups will continue to work on their assigned three example conditions (one social, one transportation, and one ecological).
- The group should review the back side of “information sheets” for their assigned conditions. This sheet includes:
 - A general model that describes how overall use levels affect more specific site use and then conditions.
 - A graph that shows the general relationship between overall use levels (e.g., inbound vehicles from entrance gates) and the condition (indicator).
- For your three conditions from the previous exercise (assigned):
 - Discuss how conditions change at higher or lower use levels.
 - Recognize the different “shapes” of curves for different conditions.
- Choose one of the three conditions.
 - Identify the use level that keeps impact at the standard you chose in Exercise 1.
 - The use level you identified is a potential capacity.
 - Identify two “other” (non-capacity) management actions that may decrease impacts.
 - You now have three “levers:” one manages use level; two are “other actions.”
 - All three actions can be used to protect river values.
- Do this for at least one other condition (if you have time, do it for all three).
- Large group discussion (35 minutes total)
 - Groups will be asked about the exercise and their decisions.
 - Instead of “reporting-out” all the details, be prepared to discuss challenges or insights for your group.
 - Facilitators have additional discussion questions.



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Exercise 3

Identifying the limiting condition and developing alternative capacities

- Groups will continue to work on their assigned three example conditions (one social, one transportation, and one ecological).
- From the previous exercises, you have a standard, a potential capacity, and two “other actions” that could reduce impacts for at least two conditions.
 - Review the capacities associated with those conditions – which is the lowest? This is the “limiting condition” (would violate standards at the lowest use level)?
- For your limiting condition, assume that you don’t want to violate your standard. Propose two management actions that would allow use to increase by 25% without violating your standard. These two actions, plus the higher capacity, create a “higher use alternative.”
- Assume that you want to enhance river values by having more stringent standards. For illustrative purposes, assume you want to cut your standard in half. How will you meet your new standard? Decide on a “new capacity” and two “other actions” that go with it. This combination creates a “lower impact alternative.”
- Facilitators will help with “time checks.”
 - Spend about 5 minutes reviewing capacities.
 - Spend about 6-8 minutes on the “higher use” alternative (keeping your standards).
 - Spend about 6-8 minutes on the “lower impact” alternative (changing your standards).
 - Entire small group component should be completed within 20 minutes.
- Large group discussion (30 minutes total)
 - Groups will be asked about the exercise and their decisions.
 - Instead of “reporting-out” all the details, be prepared to discuss challenges or insights for your group.
 - Facilitators have additional discussion questions.